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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were sent to 373 administrators in West Texas school districts with less than 500 students. The purpose of the study was to survey small school administrators' interest in leadership training through inservice education; to explore the areas of such interest; and to determine the preferences for type, location, and duration of such training. A 71-item questionnaire dealt with three major categories of administrator competence--curriculum and instruction, personnel, and operations. Demographic data collected included the administrator's title, level of administration, rural-urban setting of the school district, major type of economic support in the community, and the community ethnic breakdown. Thirty percent or more of the respondents indicated a strong interest in over one-fourth of the items on the list. Almost three-fourths of the administrators were favorable to attending a workshop on topics of interest. About 35 percent desired some type of graduate credit for such a workshop, and most were willing to travel up to 100 miles to take part. (MLF)

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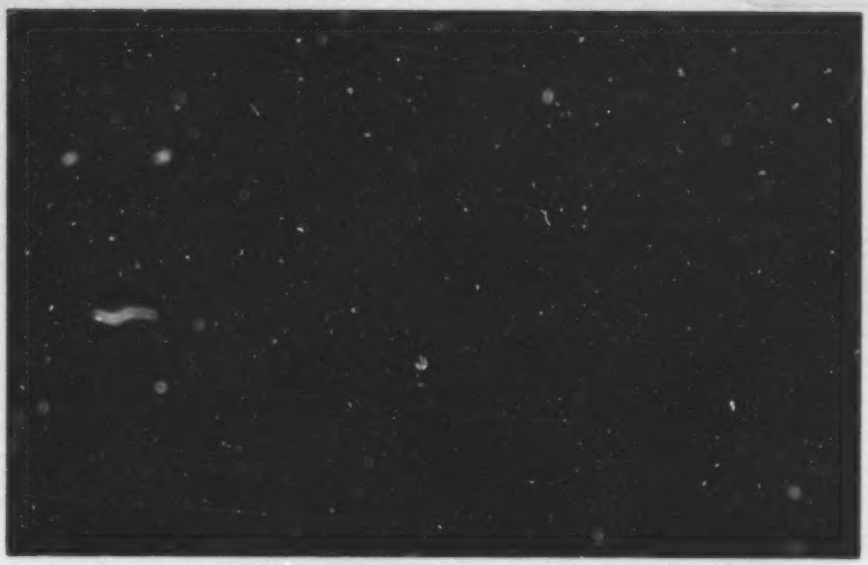

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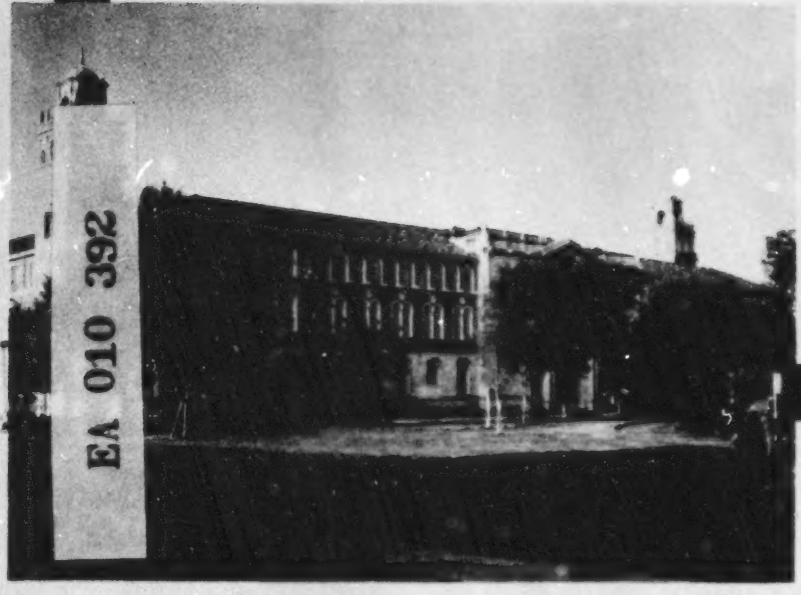

EA 010 392

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
LUBBOCK, TEXAS

IN-SERVICE EDUCATION FOR PRINCIPALS OF SMALLER SCHOOLS: WHAT RESEARCH SAYS

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A Paper Presented at the Annual Convention
of the National Association of Secondary School Principals
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for teachers is usually about all the leadership training and professional updating most administrators receive. This is often irrelevant because the administrator is placed in a group with others representing varying size districts, diverse school settings, and dissimilar problems in leadership. The literature does not adequately address itself to any of these issues.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was three-fold: (1) To survey small school administrators' interest in leadership training through in-service education; (2) To explore the areas of such interest; and (3) To determine the preferences for type, location, and duration of such training.

III. PROCEDURES

ERIC, educational indices, and bibliographical searches revealed limited data. Therefore, a group of professors and doctoral students from several of Texas Tech's educational divisions were asked to list areas which they considered important to school administrator competence. This list was expanded through a review of appropriate professional literature in education, the health professions, and business administration. Research studies were reviewed and incorporated into the list. This effort culminated in a check-list of 71 items dealing with three major categories of administrator competence--

curriculum and instruction, personnel, and operations. A questionnaire was constructed to gather information on practicing administrators' preferences among these items for in-service education activity. A demographic information sheet was included for data analysis as well as for use later to set up in-service oppurtunities for people sharing common interests and desires. The six demographic breakdowns were (1) job title--principal, supervisor or curriculum director, assistant superintendent, superintendent, other, and combination; (2) division(s) for which participants were responsible--elementary, middle or junior high, high school, kindergarten-junior high, junior-senior high, all three levels, and other; size of school district--less than 500 scholastics, 500 - 2,000 scholastics, and more than 2,000 scholastics; setting of school district--urban, suburban, rural, and combination(s); major economic support for the community--agriculture, oil, military, ranching, and various combinations. Last, the school community's ethnic breakdown was requested. It was thought that although many leadership characteristics are shared by principals and superintendents from a variety of school settings, various populations, etc., certain homogenetic characteristics would also elicit common leadership training desires.

To survey workshop preference, a fill-in-the-blanks, one-page questionnaire, was included on the back of the demographic information sheet. Three major questions were asked: (1) Do you feel that a workshop or seminar on the topics that you indicated a strong interest in would be of benefit to you? (2) Would you prefer to get graduate

credit for attendance in a workshop if it were extended to a semester's length (roughly 45 class hours)? and (3) How far would you be willing to travel to attend a workshop or seminar dealing with topics that you checked? Sub-questions included commitment to participate, number of hours an administrator would be willing to spend in a non-credit workshop, and convenient meeting times. The questionnaire was mailed to 1,219 randomly selected principals and superintendents from schools in over fifty West Texas counties, covering nearly one-half of the state.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

As mentioned earlier, one demographic information item in this study was the number of scholastics in the school district from which a randomly selected principal, supervisor or curriculum director, assistant superintendent, or superintendent was reporting. Questionnaire results sent to 373 administrators in West Texas in school districts with less than 500 scholastics is included in this report.

Of the 373 randomly selected administrators, 281 questionnaires were returned within a three-week period. This was a return rate of 75.3%. Three of the districts selected had been consolidated since the Texas Education Agency's Public School Directory, 1976-77 was printed. In comparison to the questionnaires returned by administrators from schools representing 500 - 2,000 scholastics and 2,000 - plus scholastics, the rate of return from the administrators of schools with districts with less than 500 scholastics was significantly

greater-- 76% as compared to 61.9% and 56.7% respectively. Several tables follow to show the data collected.

TABLE I

RESULTS OF SURVEY ON LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS IN WEST TEXAS: AREAS IN WHICH ADMINISTRATORS INDICATED A STRONG DESIRE TO IMPROVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND/OR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

(School Districts with less than 500 Scholastics; N = 281)

Area	Number of Administrators Indicating Strong Interest	Percentage
Curriculum and Instruction		
Team Teaching	39	14.0
Audio-visual Materials and Equipment	24	8.5
Individualized Instruction	97	34.6
Grading System Improvement	99	35.2
Size of Classes	21	7.5
Learning Theories	43	15.3
Special Education	35	12.5
School Organization (class scheduling, etc.)	116	41.3
Curriculum Revision and/or Organization	154	54.8
Student Activities and Services:		
Leagues, Associations, etc.	37	13.2
Intramural Athletics	17	6.8
Athletics, Cheerleading, etc.	29	10.3
Student Publications	24	8.5
Counseling Services	136	48.4
Student Trips	48	17.1
Courses of Study:		
Writing and Revising Syllabi	58	20.6
New Courses of an Academic Nature (i.e., sex education)	55	19.6
New Courses in Areas such as Vocational-Technical Education. Career Education, etc.	126	44.8
Review of Textbooks	77	27.4

Understanding Students:		
The Problem Child	93	33.1
Modern Teen-age Problems	96	34.2
Speech and Communication Problems	42	14.9
Parent-student Relations	80	28.6
Adjustment of Moving into a New School	37	13.2
Discipline: Legal and Effective	194	69.0
Special Education Needs	51	18.1
Personnel		
Recruitment, Employment, and Retention of Employees (E.E.O. Rules and Regulations, etc.)	109	38.8
Organizations and Negotiations	41	14.6
Open-record Laws and the Right to Privacy	11	25.3
Status of Females in Employment	10	3.6
Benefits (retirement, leaves, insurance, tenure, etc.)	58	20.6
Evaluations	142	50.5
Dismissal: Legally and Professionally	144	51.2
Job Descriptions	69	24.6
Teacher Accountability	136	48.4
Credentials and Qualifications	24	8.5
In-Service Education Techniques and Materials	90	32.0
Group Dynamics: Assigning Faculty Growth and Developmental Tasks	39	13.9
Student Teachers and Interns	20	7.1
Leadership Techniques	87	31.0
Ancillary Services Personnel:		
School Health Personnel	38	13.5
Maintenance and Custodial Personnel and Cafeteria Workers	86	30.6
Transportation Personnel	37	13.2
Operations		
Financial:		
Preparing Budgets: departmental, school and district levels	116	41.3
Tax-office Operations	84	29.9
Sources of Revenue	54	19.2
A.D.A. Reports	50	17.8
Accountability Reports: Expenditures	59	21.0
Zero-based Budget Preparations	40	14.2

Administrative In-service	7	
Curricular:		
Bus Runs	21	7.5
Laws and School Compliances Regarding the Handicapped	34	12.1
Preparation for Accreditation Teams (The Self-Study)	102	36.3
School Activities and Learning Experiences Reports	31	11.0
School Libraries	40	14.2
Graduates: Follow-up Studies	30	10.7
Testing Services	68	24.2
Minority and Low Income Programs	27	9.6
Non-traditional Students (i.e. continuing education, G.E.D. preparations, etc.)	32	11.4
General Operations:		
Buildings and Grounds	46	16.4
Public Relations	93	33.1
Utilization of Community Resources	51	18.1
Faculty and/or Staff Meetings	65	23.1
Absenteeism and Tardiness and Policies for Each	94	33.5
Faculty (or Staff) Personality Conflicts	79	28.1
Inventories	26	9.3
Computer Utilization	28	10.0
Reports in General	26	9.3
School Boards and Advisory Boards	44	15.7
The School Calendar	43	15.3
Courtesy and Benevolent Funds	8	2.8
Student Fund Raising	43	15.3

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO SURVEY ON LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Size of School District	Less than 500 scholastics	500 - 2,000 scholastics	2,000 -plus scholastics
Number of Surveys Mailed	373	305	441
Number of Surveys Returned	281	189	250
Percentage of Return	75.3	61.9	56.7

TABLE III

JOB TITLE OF RESPONDENTS

(Less than 500 Scholastics in School District)

Title	Number Responding	Percentage Responding
Principal	214	76.2
Supervisor or Curriculum Director	1	.4
Assistant Superintendent	0	-
Superintendent	63	22.4
Other	1	.4
Combination	2	.7

TABLE IV

DIVISION(S) FOR WHICH RESPONDENTS WERE RESPONSIBLE

(Less than 500 Scholastics in School District)

Division(s)	Number Responding	Percentage Responding
Elementary	64	22.8
Middle or Junior High School	30	10.7
High School	56	19.9
Kindergarten - Junior High	21	7.5
Junior - Senior High	25	8.9
Elementary, Junior, and Senior High	82	29.2
No Indication	1	.4
Other	2	.7

TABLE V

MAJOR SETTING OF SCHOOL DISTRICT

(School Districts with Less than 500 Scholastics)

Description of Setting	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Urban	27	9.6
Suburban	15	5.3
Rural	237	84.3
Combinations	0	-
No Response	2	.7

TABLE VI

MAJOR ECONOMIC SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY

(School Districts with Less than 500 Scholastics)

Economic Area of Support	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Agriculture	80	28.5
Oil	37	13.2
Military	1	.4
Ranching	10	3.6
Agriculture and Oil	45	16.0
Agriculture and Ranching	34	12.1
Oil and Ranching	17	6.0
Combination of several of the above	53	18.9
No dominant industry or trade	4	1.4

TABLE VII

RESPONDENTS' WORKSHOP PREFERENCES

(School Districts with Less than 500 Scholastics)

Question: Do you feel that a workshop or seminar on the topics that you indicated a strong interest in would be of benefit to you?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	208	74.0
No	2	.7
No Response	71	25.3

Question: If "yes," would you be willing to participate in a workshop or seminar dealing with one of the topics if the time and place were convenient to you?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	199	70.8
No	4	1.4
Maybe	1	.4
No Response	77	27.4

Question: If "yes," how much time would you be willing to spend in a workshop dealing with one of the topics or areas that you checked?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1 - 3 hours	73	26.0
4 - 6 hours	69	24.6
7 hours - plus	42	14.9
Any length of time	3	1.1
Combination 1-3 & 4-6 hours	4	1.4
Combination 4-6 & 7-plus hours	3	1.1
Other	7	2.5
No Response	80	28.4

Question: Would you prefer to get graduate credit for attendance in a workshop if it were extended to a semester's length (roughly 45 class hours)?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	96	34.2
Yes, if doctoral credit	1	.4
No	95	33.8
Immaterial	6	2.1
No Response	83	29.5

TABLE VIII

LENGTH OF TRAVEL (IN MILES) TO ATTEND AN IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

(School Districts with Less than 500 Scholastics)

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Less than 20 miles	15	5.3
20 - 50 miles	105	37.4
51 - 100 miles	73	26.0
Other	6	2.1
No Response	81	28.8

V. CONCLUSIONS

A significant need was considered to be expressed by the school administrators' surveys when 30% or more of the respondents indicated a strong interest in the item. As can be seen in the above Table I, these include the following.

In the area of curriculum and instruction: individualized instruction, grading system improvement, school organization (class scheduling, etc.), curriculum revision and/or organization, counseling services, new courses in vocational and career education, the problem child, modern teen-age problems, and discipline.

In the area of personnel administration: recruitment, employment and retention of employees, evaluations, dismissal, teacher accountability, in-service education, leadership techniques, and maintenance and service personnel (other than transportation).

In the area of operations: budget preparation, preparation for accreditation visits, public relations, and absenteeism and tardiness.

The responses did not differ significantly on the basis of the type of administrator, level of administration (high school, junior high school, elementary school), setting of the school district, or major type of economic support in the community.

Responses concerning workshop sessions indicated that almost three-fourths of the administrators were favorable to attending a workshop on topics of interest, with 26% preferring a session of one to three hours, 24.6% four to six hours, and 14.9% seven hours or more.

About 35% desired some type of graduate credit for such a workshop, and most were willing to travel up to 100 miles to take part.

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